



Vol 1. #4

Good Morning. It is August 6th. Many of you have contracted your calves on video auctions or are thinking about selling calves within the next 90 days. Lisa Duffey, Marc King and Gary Brester from MSU have conducted studies over the past five years to determine the value of BQA certified calves and BQA production practices by Montana producers. The following is a brief summary of their research.

What types of records do Montana ranchers keep?

The results of a mail-in survey conducted by Duffey, et al., (2007, in press) to determine the level of record keeping and methods of identifying producers who were Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified are presented in the following table. Significant differences were found between BQA certified producers and non-BQA certified producers regarding the types of records maintained on the ranch (Table 1).

Table 1. Types and format of records maintained by BQA certified and not- BQA certified producers (Duffey et al., 2007, In press)

Item	BQA Certified		Not-BQA Certified		t value
	n	%	n	%	
Types of records maintained					
Animal number and description	199	86.1	80	69.0	3.87*
Vaccination records	194	84.0	69	59.5	5.20*
Calf birth records	180	77.9	75	64.7	2.66*
Animal purchases and sales	178	77.1	77	66.4	2.13*
Cowherd records	170	73.6	57	49.1	4.64*
BQA records	104	45.0	5	4.3	8.44*
Names of suppliers and buyers	100	43.3	34	29.3	2.54*
Feed records	89	38.5	29	25.0	2.53*
Where animal was born	78	33.8	27	23.3	2.01*
No records kept	8	3.5	9	7.8	
Animal Identification Methods					
Plastic Ear Tag	212	91.8	90	77.6	3.78*
Hot Iron	185	80.1	75	64.7	3.17*
Ear Tattoo	48	20.8	14	12.1	2.00*
Ear notch	31	13.4	18	15.5	
Electronic Tag	25	10.8	2	1.7	3.02*
Freeze Brand	22	9.5	11	9.5	

Metal Tag	19	8.2	8	6.9
No Identification	0	0	0	0

* $P < 0.05$.

- More ($P < 0.05$) BQA producers (86.1%) kept track of animal numbers and descriptions than did non-BQA producers (69.0%).
- *The BQA-certified producers (73.6%) kept more ($P < 0.05$) cowherd records than non-BQA producers (49.1%).*
- In addition, the BQA producers (84.0%) maintained more ($P < 0.05$) vaccination records than non-BQA producers (59.5%).
- Records on purchase and sale of animals were maintained by 77.1% of BQA and 66.4% of non-BQA respondents ($P < 0.05$).
- Only 43.3% of BQA respondents and 29.3% of non-BQA respondents reported maintaining records of suppliers and buyers of their cattle ($P < 0.05$).
- There were differences between BQA producers (20.3%) and non-BQA producers (8.6%) who used on-farm electronic record keeping system, such as Excel.
- The majority of the respondents kept records for more than two years, although there was a difference ($P < 0.05$) between BQA producers (84.4%) and non-BQA producers (69.8%).

The respondents were also asked how they identified their animals (Table 1). Respondents were allowed to choose all answers that applied to their management situation.

- More ($P < 0.05$) BQA producers (91.8%) used plastic ear tags for animal identification than did non-BQA producers (77.6%) and

BQA producers (80.1%) were more likely ($P < 0.05$) to use a hot iron brand than were the non-BQA producers (64.7%). Even though Montana is a brand-law state, it does not mandate that animals be branded.

The Value of BQA certification

A mail survey was conducted by King et al. (2000) . The survey was sent to 400 Beef Network members who were BQA certified and 400 non-members. Responses were received from 147 members and 69 nonmembers. The following conclusions were drawn from the survey:

- In 2000, MBN members averaged \$98.04/cwt for steer calves; non-members averaged \$96.42/cwt – with the differences being statistically significant.
- MBN members averaged \$93.28/cwt for heifer calves; non-members averaged \$91.82/cwt – with the differences being statistically significant.
- No statistical differences between members and non-members were found for calf sale weights, sale methods, or number of calves marketed.
- MBN members used modified live vaccines relative to killed vaccines much more frequently than non-members.
- On average, MBN members vaccinated calves 1.73 times; non-members vaccinated calves 1.35 times – with the difference being statistically significant.
- After accounting for calf sale weights (and the number of years out of the last five that ranchers had marketed cattle to the same buyer), it appears that the MBN program added \$1.56/cwt to steer calf prices and \$1.09/cwt to heifer calf prices.

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